



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

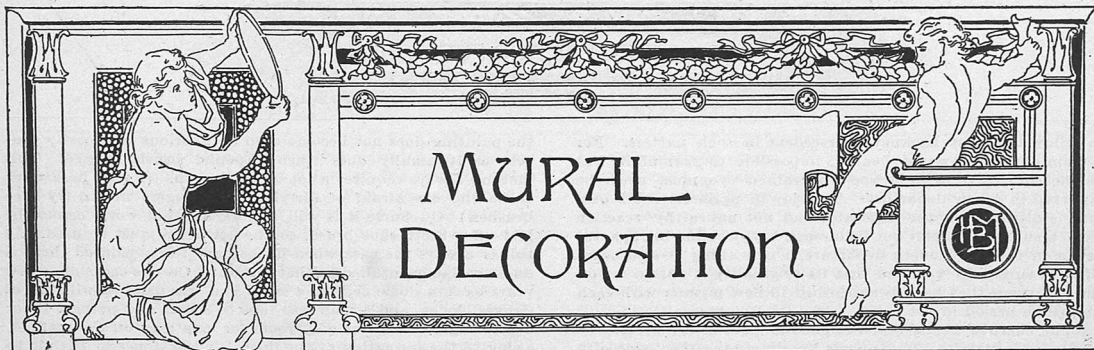
This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



## A NEW TREATMENT OF BAS-RELIEFS IN COLORED PLASTER.

By R. A. BELL.



IT is pleasant to note in the revival of the sculptor's art in England, which, if a thing of yesterday, is rapidly maturing, that two varieties, so long almost forgotten by English sculptors, are receiving due consideration. The first is the art of the bas-relief, which, except during the period of Flaxman and Wedgwood, has but rarely flourished among us; the next, the use of applied color, which, as examples of the Middle Ages and Renaissance still left us prove, has before taken firm of popular taste at certain periods.

To delight in high relief in carved work, whether it be in stone or wood, is not necessarily evil, but the recognition of the delicate charm of low relief might almost be claimed as a proof of educated taste. The deep shadows and more sensational effect of alto-relievo work attract attention sooner than the subtle planes of that modelling which uses light and shadow in the most refined way. For merely practical reasons, the comparatively slight harborage it affords for dust, the greater facility for cleaning the surface, and its subordinate effect in interior decoration, combine to render work in low-relief better adapted for our climate and for our homes.

When to such low-relief work color is applied—whether on a foundation of carved wood, gesso, or plaster, it matters not—we are confronted with a decoration that, while it may easily be made vulgar, is yet at its best far more in accordance with good taste than the more ornate enrichments dear to the furnishing upholsterer, and it is to be feared to the public at large. Here, however, we are not concerned with the main questions of high relief, much less of colored sculpture, a topic that has provoked more bitter expression of opinion than it deserved. The Greeks may or may not have colored their statues and friezes; the naturalistic carvings of Grinling Gibbons, and the rococo decorations of 1851 may be left to their defenders. One name alone need be quoted as a splendid precedent for low-relief work in color—Luca della Robbia. True, the faience he adorned differs essentially from the work we illustrate here; but the difference, great though it be, is not so much felt as the likeness. Not that Mr. R. A. Bell, the young artist who

has in these made for himself a distinct mark, has imitated glazed earthenware in plaster; but he has seen the charm of low relief modelling emphasized by color, and has followed good tradition in the handling of his materials, while imparting the accent of individuality which separates them from previous attempts. It may be urged that colored plaster decoration is not permanent, that its colors are liable to fade, and its materials easily damaged; yet, considering the alteration in form which fired clay is sure to suffer, and the comparative poverty of the palette in earthenware glazes, there is much to be said in favor of this simple method. Possibly with further experiment some worker to-day may be as fortunate in this art of colored relief work as Luca della Robbia, who, we are told, found suddenly a glaze of almost endless durability, so that he may be said to have begun and completed his invention with one stroke.

Like Andrea della Robbia, Mr. Bell delights in the charm of that impossible convention, the cherub's head, which, despite its unreality, has witched artists and laymen for so many centuries until it seems as normal as the portrait of a living creature. But the similarity extends scarcely beyond the choice of subject; the dull, vacant features which imitators of the Della Robbias chose to the degradation of their model are not seen in these baby faces, which are as fresh and dainty as are the heads by Reynolds in his well-known group, and yet have much more than prettiness to recommend them. In this work on archaic lines, as much as in the other panels illustrated, we find the distinct note of to-day, which is needed to distinguish any revival of a half-forgotten art. To imitate a bygone period in a dull and listless manner is hardly worthy serious consideration; but to adopt just so much of the old style as is worth reviving, and infuse into it the qualities modern taste deems essential, is in its way a new creation. This quality is present in the angel heads; although it may not be so apparent in the reproductions as it is in the originals. In the panels "Harvest" and "Honeysuckle" no such doubt can exist. The most casual glance shows them to be modern, and the most patient study fails to show that they are not legitimate in their convention. In line, or in proportion, or as panel decorations, they are sober and scholarly, and withal new, only those whose business it is to criticize closely the mass of decorative work produced to-day can fully realize the pleasure it is to a jaded eye to light upon work that is at once original and beautiful. To take up certain forms and schemes of color never before used may be originality in one sense, but it is like the originality of a mis-spelt word or a falsely accented classical word—novel only in the sense that people of taste and education have wilfully preferred



HONEYSUCKLE. FROM A RELIEF IN COLORED PLASTER. BY R. ANNING BELL.

to follow the most hackneyed precedent in such matters. For certain abstract laws of beauty, impossible to formulate, but yet not so elusive as to escape any trained eye, must needs be observed in a new departure. The joy in ugliness for its own sake is often merely the inevitable and not unhealthy reaction from a surfeit of pretty but feeble art, but, whether in Japanese art or in the last modern departure, a new thing is also beautiful, so surely do you find that its originality is not so far off the few types that have been clothed in new manner with each successive period in art.

The cherubs' heads were designed as part of the decoration of a wooden pulpit. The angels kneeling at either side of a shield is the highest panel of the altar-piece of the Church of St. Clare (R. C.), Liverpool. This reredos has five paintings and eight colored panels in relief, the one we illustrate being fifteen feet from the ground.

To bring sculpture into harmony with the surroundings of modern life is a worthy enterprise, and since, as the laws of evolution exist, the natural progression is from small to great, it is, perhaps, the most hopeful sign of the art to-day that it does not disdain to consider the lesser branches; and in medallions, mural tablets, small bronzes, and busts decoratively treated, is able to depart from the models of classic art and the Renaissance, and yet keep faithful to the spirit of the past.

## DECORATING WALL HANGINGS.—II.

BY ERBON.

**N**OW take flock paper in the plain or undecorated state and imagine a ceiling has been papered with it, and ready for decorating. Of course it will need sizing. This appears a very simple process to many, no doubt; but those who have not had the opportunity of doing any (and there are a great many in the present generation of painters and so-called decorators), and make their first attempt, will soon find that it is not such an easy matter after all. The size will froth or saponify, and ciss off the flock. The cissing or frothing can easily be remedied by adding a little boiled oil, turps or spirit. I have always found naphtha the best; it is more volatile, and this property causes it to dry or evaporate much sooner than oil or turps, without leaving any residue of a greasy nature behind it.

To do the sizing more expeditiously, try a very ordinary shoe brush (a polishing one for choice). Try this and work with the pattern. Those who have not done so before will find that the work can be done much easier, with more satisfaction and at half the cost.

It will also be found that by using the same kind of brushes

the painting does not become such a laborious and costly process as it usually does when a pound brush is used. This method always requires a lot of hitting in. (I may here warn those who are afraid of dirtying their fingers not to try shoe brushes.) Of course it is well understood that work cannot be laid off with a shoe brush, so the strippler must be used. As this is always the case when flocks have to be painted there is no extra labor entailed on that account. On one occasion, a few years back, a dome ceiling, a small one, was papered with one of Graves' flocks, and a man was sent to size it and prepare it for decorating. There was only room for one man on the scaffold, owing to the formation of the dome, and as Jones had it all to himself, having been sent to the job after breakfast, dinner

time came and still Jones had not finished hisizing. Poor Jones had been sizing double flock with a new stock brush.

We will consider our flock ready for decorating, and that it has received one or two coats of color, as the case may be. I think rolling, in all cases, the most satisfactory, as when this is done further detail can be put in by picking out, gilding or bronzing certain portions of the ornaments. I also am of the opinion that it is a great mistake to roll the relief in a color darker than the ground, although it is frequently done, as by so doing you knock the raised parts back, instead of bringing them forward, as must naturally be the case if lighter than the ground.

Flocks do not lend themselves happily for producing scumbled or wiped-off effects, the relief being too rough or granulated, holding the color too much. However, this is in some instances an advantage, for instance, when used for a dado, and a dark effect is wanted, I have seen some very successful and high-class jobs turned out, done as follows: Ground your walls or ceilings with, say, a bright yellow

color made with No. 2 chrome. Of course, this must be to shade required. Then roll the relief with the same color, lightened out so as to show a good contrast. Then when quite dry and hard, and there is no fear of any working up, make a flat, a very pale blue. Take care that it is laid on evenly and well stippled. Then you will have a very subdued lavender or gray, considerably more agreeable and pleasing than if it had been done in an opaque color. This method of getting rich and transparent effects more particularly applies to various greens, peacock blues, maroons, turkey reds, etc. A great deal depends upon experience in getting a good and satisfactory job. Much can be said about flocks and what can be done with them, but, being such old friends, every one is acquainted with and knows how to make the most of them.



CHERUBS' HEADS. FROM A FRIZZE IN COLORED PLASTER. BY R. ANNING BELL.